



QUESTIONS FROM THE FIELD

Question: Can extension cords be used in a long-term care facility?

Answer: Yes! Extension cords may be used in accordance with the following regulatory requirements.*

If extension cords are used, they must be Underwriters Laboratories (UL)-approved or shall comply with other recognized electrical appliance approval standards and sized to carry the current required for the appliance used. Only one (1) appliance shall be connected to one (1) extension cord. Only two (2) appliances may be served by one (1) duplex receptacle. Extension cords shall not be placed under rugs, through doorways, or located where they are subject to physical damage.

Facilities certified to provide Medicare/Medicaid services are also required to comply with the following regulatory guidance:

K147 - Facilities are required to comply with the National Electric Code Section 400-8: Uses Not Permitted. Unless specifically permitted in Section 400-7, flexible cords and cables shall not be used for the following:

1. As a substitute for fixed wiring of a structure
2. Where run through holes in walls, structural ceilings, suspended ceilings, dropped ceilings, or floors
3. Where run through doorways, windows, or similar openings
4. Where attached to building surfaces
Exception: Flexible cord and cable shall be permitted to be attached to building surfaces in accordance with the provisions of Section 364-8
5. Where concealed behind building walls, structural ceilings, suspended ceilings, dropped ceilings, or floors
6. Where installed in raceways, except as otherwise permitted in this Code

F323 - Extension cords should not be used to take the place of adequate wiring in a facility. If extension cords are used, the cords should be properly secured and not be placed overhead, under carpets or rugs, or anywhere that the cord can cause trips, falls, or overheat. Extension cords should be connected to only one device to prevent overloading of the circuit. The cord itself should be of a size and type for the expected electrical load and made of material that will not fray or cut easily. Electrical cords including extension cords should have proper grounding if required and should not have any grounding devices removed or not used if required.

Power strips may not be used as a substitute for adequate electrical outlets in a facility. Power strips may be used for a computer, monitor, and printer. Power strips are not designed to be used with medical devices in patient care areas. Precautions needed if power strips are used include: installing internal ground fault and over-current protection devices; preventing cords from becoming tripping hazards; and using power strips that are adequate for the number and types of devices used. Overload on any circuit can potentially cause overheating and fire. The use of ground fault circuit interruption (GFCIs) may be required in locations near water sources to prevent electrocution of staff or residents.

Extension cords as opposed to surge protectors (e.g. used for sensitive electronic devices – TVs, computers, etc.) can only be used temporarily. Examples of temporary use may be holiday lights, power tools, etc.

Dave's Memo: I know that there has always been confusion about the use of extension cords. If you need clarification or have questions, please contact your local DHSS Office.

*<http://health.mo.gov/safety/ltcqa/>

*[State Operations Manual Appendix PP](#)

Please e-mail your "Questions from the Field" to Dave Walker, LTC Leadership Coach, Sinclair School of Nursing, University of Missouri at walkerdavi@missouri.edu